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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4891
INFO ARAB-ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 015987

DEPT FOR NEA, NEA/IAI, SMEC AND S/CT
LONDON FOR SUTPHIN; PARIS FOR LIEF
NSC FOR RIEDEL/MALLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/09
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAELI RAID KILLS HAMAS ACTIVISTS

CLASSIFIED BY POL/C JOHN SCOTT. REASON 1.5(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) THE GOI'S BUREAU FOR COUNTERTERRORISM CONFIRMED ON DECEMBER 14 THAT AN IDF SPECIAL FORCES UNIT KILLED EIAD BATAT AND NADER MASALMAH IN A FIREFIGHT THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 13. THE CLASH OCCURRED IN THE VILLAGE OF BEIT AWWA, IN AREA B, APPROXIMATELY 10 KMS WEST OF HEBRON, NEAR THE GREEN LINE. ACCORDING TO MEDIA REPORTS, BATAT AND MASALMAH OPENED FIRE ON THE IDF UNIT AS IT APPROACHED THE HOUSE THEY WERE IN. THE SPECIAL FORCES UNIT RETURNED FIRE, KILLING BATAT AS HE TRIED TO ENTER A VEHICLE TO FLEE AND MASALMAH, AS HE FIRED ON THE ISRAELIS FROM THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE. THE EIGHT OTHERS IN THE HOUSE AT THE TIME -- INCLUDING A WOMAN AND CHILDREN -- WERE UNHARMED. BATAT REPORTEDLY WAS CARRYING A HANDGUN AND EXPLOSIVES. GOI SOURCES TOLD THE MEDIA THAT BASED ON "EVIDENCE" AT THE SCENE AND "INTELLIGENCE" INFORMATION, IT APPEARED THAT BATAT AND MASALMAH WERE PREPARING TO CARRY OUT A TERRORIST ATTACK. THREE INDIVIDUALS WERE ARRESTED IN THE RAID, INCLUDING RELATIVES OF MASALMAH.

¶2. (C) ACCORDING TO LTCOL UDI LEVI OF THE COUNTERTERRORISM BUREAU, THE IDF UNIT HAD SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT BATAT'S AND MASALMAH'S WHEREABOUTS. LEVI DESCRIBED BATAT AS A "SENIOR" FIGURE IN THE HAMAS MILITARY WING WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN A FIREFIGHT IN THE OTNIEL SETTLEMENT SW OF HEBRON LAST JANUARY, IN WHICH ONE BORDER POLICE OFFICER WAS KILLED AND ONE IDF SOLDIER WOUNDED. LEVI SAID BATAT HAD BEEN OPERATING IN THE SOUTHERN WEST BANK FOR SOME TIME. HE DESCRIBED THE DECEMBER 13 RAID AS THE GOI'S MOST SUCCESSFUL AGAINST HAMAS SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 1998 ATTACK -- ALSO NEAR HEBRON -- WHICH KILLED THE ABWADALLAH BROTHERS.

¶3. (U) IN RESPONSE TO THE RAID, HAMAS LEADERS PUBLICLY VOWED TO CONTINUE ATTACKING ISRAELIS AND WARNED THAT ISRAEL BORE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ATTACK. PA LEGISLATOR HANAN ASHRAWI CONDEMNED THE RAID, TELLING THE MEDIA THAT BATAT AND MASALMAH HAD BEEN KILLED IN COLD BLOOD, AS PART OF THE GOI'S POLICY OF "DELIBERATELY TARGETING, THEN ASSASSINATING" WANTED INDIVIDUALS THEY COULD NOT OTHERWISE BRING TO JUSTICE.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: LEVI WOULD NOT CONFIRM (BUT DID NOT DENY) THAT THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY WAS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT BATAT'S AND MASALMAH'S WHEREABOUTS, SINCE BEIT AWWA LIES IN THE AREA UNDER JOINT GOI-PA CONTROL. ALTHOUGH BATAT HAS LONG BEEN SOUGHT BY THE GOI, MASALMAH IS A NEWCOMER WHOSE NAME HAS NOT APPEARED PREVIOUSLY ON ANY GOI LIST OF KNOWN TERRORISTS. HE SIMPLY MAY HAVE BEEN IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME.

WALKER